

Bill would allow electric co-op to keep water rights

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The Salt Lake Tribune

Article Last Updated: 11/14/2007 12:21:28 PM MST

A proposed law that would allow the state engineer to extend water rights beyond the current allowable 50 years received a favorable recommendation Wednesday from a legislative committee.

The bill's sponsor, Rep. Gordon Snow, R-Roosevelt, told the Public Utilities and Technology Interim Committee the bill would apply only to electric power cooperatives.

If passed during the coming legislative session, the law would allow Deseret Generation and Transmission to keep half the water rights it holds for its Bonanza power plant in Vernal. Though planned as a two-unit plant, the cooperative has only built one unit.

Deseret spokesman David Crabtree said the company has put half the water rights to use, but risks losing the other half if the water isn't put to use before the rights expire in about a year.

The Desert cooperative's owners are Bridger Valley Electric, Dixie Escalante, Flowell Electric, Garkane Energy, Moon Lake Electric and Mt. Wheeler Power.